

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 049275

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN, PEPR

SUBJECT: WEEKLY ACTIVITIES REPORT, FEBRUARY 13-24
(TWO WEEKS)

1. SUMMARY: THE CLOSED SESSION OF THE SENATE DOMINATED OUR ATTENTION DURING THIS FORTNIGHT. WE BELIEVE THAT THE ISSUE OF THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE NARCOTICS TRADE HAS FADED AS A TREATY ISSUE. A SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE VETERANS' COMMITTEE WILL HOLD HEARINGS NEXT WEEK TO CONSIDER THE CARE OF THE AMERICANS BURIED IN THE CANAL ZONE. WE CONSULTED WITH THE BRITISH ABOUT CERTAIN PROVISIONS CONCERNING THE NEUTRALITY TREATY. THE EXPROPRIATION GROUP MET AND DECIDED TO POSTPONE DECISIONS ABOUT BOSTON PANAMA AND CITRICOS.

2. CONGRESSIONAL: THE CONGRESS WAS IN RECESS DURING THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 13.

A. TREATY DEBATE: THE SENATE WENT INTO CLOSED SESSION
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ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, AND PART OF WEDNESDAY TO DISCUSS DRUG TRAFFICKING IN PANAMA. THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT TORRIJOS IS PERSONALLY INVOLVED AND

THAT THE ISSUE IS PERIPHERAL TO THE TREATY DEBATE. THE OPPONENTS PERIODICALLY RE-IGNITE THE CHARGES THAT THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE IS INDICATIVE OF THE IRRESPONSIBILITY

AND CORRUPT NATURE OF THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT, BUT IN GENERAL THE ISSUE HAS FADED.

A VOTE WAS TAKEN ON WEDNESDAY ON A MOTION BY SENATOR ALLEN THAT THE ORDER OF CONSIDERATION FOR THE TREATIES BE REVERSED, TAKING THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY FIRST. AS HE STATED IT, "IN THE INTEREST OF LOGIC, WE SHOULD DECIDE FIRST IF WE ARE GOING TO GIVE THE CANAL AWAY BEFORE WE DECIDE HOW WE'RE GOING TO DEFEND IT IN THE YEAR 2000." THE MOTION WAS TABLED BY A VOTE OF 67 TO 30.

THE MAJOR ISSUES IN THE FLOOR DEBATE HAVE BEEN THE NATURE OF THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT, THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF THE NEW COMMISSION AND OUR DEFENSE RIGHTS AFTER THE YEAR 2000.

B. HOUSE HEARING: THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CEMETERIES AND BURIALS OF THE HOUSE VETERAN'S COMMITTEE WILL BE HOLDING HEARINGS ON MARCH 1 REGARDING PLANS FOR THE CARE OF AMERICANS BURIED IN THE CANAL ZONE UNDER THE NEW TREATIES. DICK WYROUGH WILL BE THE DEPARTMENT'S WITNESS. REPRESENTATIVES FROM PAN CANAL, THE ARMY AND THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION WILL ALSO APPEAR. OUR JOINT POSITION WILL BE THAT THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL, OF WHICH THE EMBASSY IS AWARE, IS THE MOST FEASIBLE OF THE SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED THUS FAR.

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3. MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS: MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES DROPPED TO THE LOWEST LEVEL IN SEVERAL WEEKS DURING THE CONGRESSIONAL RECESS. HOWEVER WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE SENATE DEBATE AND THE TWO DAYS OF SECRET SESSIONS ON THE DRUG ISSUE, COVERAGE HAS ONCE AGAIN BECOME INTENSE. ALL MAJOR NEWSPAPERS HAVE GIVEN FRONT PAGE PRIME SPACE TO THE SECRET SESSIONS. THE THREE LEADING NEWS MAGAZINES HAVE DEVOTED MORE THAN A PAGE TO THE BEGINNING OF THE DEBATE AND ALL THREE COMMERCIAL TV NETWORKS HAVE FEATURED CANAL RELATED INTERVIEWS ON THEIR PRIME-TIME NEWS SHOWS. THE SENATE DEBATE IS BEING CARRIED LIVE BY THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL RADIO NETWORK, THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY THAT A SENATE SESSION HAS BEEN BROADCAST.

THERE WAS A MINIMUM OF EDITORIAL AND "OP-ED" COMMENTARY THIS LAST WEEK. HOWEVER, THE FRIDAY FEB. 24 EVANS-OVAK COLUMN IS DEVOTED TO U.S. RELINQUISHMENT OF A "TOP SECRET

THE CANAL ZONE". THE TEXT OF THE COLUMN WAS SENT TO THE CANAL ZONE". THE TEXT OF THE COLUMN WAS SENT TO THE EMBASSY ON THE FBIS WIRELESS.

AMBASSADOR BUNKER HAS GIVEN SPEECHES IN ERIE AND PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA AND NEW YORK CITY; TO A WORLD-PEACE-THROUGH-LAW GROUP IN WASHINGTON, AND TO UNIVERSITY AUDIENCES IN KNOXVILLE AND NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE. DICK WYROUGH SPOKE IN BALTIMORE, CHICAGO, AND TO UNIVERSITY AUDIENCES IN MURFREESBORO AND CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE. DAVE WAGNER SPOKE TO AN EAGLE SCOUT RECOGNITION DINNER IN DOYLESTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA.

4. CONSULTATIONS WITH THE BRITISH: ARA/PAN AND L MET AN OFFICIAL OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY ON FEB. 21. THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE HAD RAISED THREE QUESTIONS CONCERNING PROVISIONS OF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY THAT MIGHT AFFECT CONFIDENTIAL

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TRANSIT OF NUCLEAR VESSELS OR CARGOES. WE GAVE THE BRITISH AN INFORMAL OPINION THAT REASSURED THEM AND WHICH WILL LEAD, WE HOPE, TO THEIR SOON ISSUING A STATEMENT ENDORSING THE TREATIES.

5. INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION REPORT: THE IAHRC WILL NOT PUBLISH ITS REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN PANAMA BEFORE JULY OR AUGUST. THE REASONS FOR THE DELAY ARE THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE DATE OF THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO MAY, AND THE IAHRC'S RECEIPT OF BETWEEN 20,000 AND 25,000 PAGES OF DOCUMENTS WHICH THE COMMISSION HAD REQUESTED FROM PANAMA.

6. EXPROPRIATION GROUP MEETING, FEBRUARY 23: THE GROUP REVIEWED THE BOSTON PANAMA AND CITRICOS CASES. WITH REGARD TO THE FORMER, THE GROUP DECIDED THAT PERTINENT INFORMATION WAS STILL NOT KNOWN. L/ARA WILL WORK WITH EMBASSY PANAMA AND THE PANAMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO OBTAIN THE INFORMATION. IN THE CASE OF CITRICOS, THE GROUP RECOGNIZED THAT THE DISPUTE REVOLVES AROUND THE AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION TO BE PAID FOR THE ENTERPRISE. WHAT IS LACKING IS INFORMATION ON THE VALUATION OF THE PROPERTY. L/ARA WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER. VANCE

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